

Understanding and Critique: The Return of the Critique of Ideologies

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My presentation focuses on the recent revival of ideology critique. I am interested in the question of whether and how new conceptualizations of ideology critique can overcome the objections related to the tension between understanding and critique that have plagued classic Marxist conceptions of ideology critique and led critical theorists such as Habermas to abandon it altogether. In contrast to Habermas, I think that ideology critique is an important tool for critical theorists. To defend this view, I first analyze important ways in which the new approaches to ideology critique differ from the classical Marxist approach and show how this enables them to avoid standard objections to the latter approach. Moreover, in my view, these approaches are perfectly compatible with the ‘democratic turn’ of critical theory. In a last step, I turn to Habermas’s distinctive objections to ideology critique in order to show that, while they may call the feasibility of the classical Marxist approach into question, they leave room for a properly transformed approach to the critique of ideology in contemporary societies.